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Israel Denies Running a Widespread Espionage Operation in U.S.

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WASHINGTON, May 31 — The Israeli Government Saturday strongly denied reports of a widespread and well-financed Israeli intelligence operation that gathered classified material in the United States.

"These allegations are baseless," the Israeli Embassy said in a written statement.

It was issued a day after a Reagan Administration official said Federal prosecutors were expected to charge an Israeli military officer in connection with intelligence activities in the United States.

The American official said the Israeli had ties to Jonathan Jay Pollard, a civilian analyst for the United States Navy who has been charged with providing Israel with classified documents. It was reported earlier in the week that Mr. Pollard was part of a much larger Israeli spying operation than had been reported.

'An Unauthorized Deviation'

In the statement, Yossi Gal, an embassy spokesman, repeated earlier assertions that the spying operation had not been approved by the Israeli Government.

"The Pollard affair was an unauthorized deviation from the clear-cut Israeli policy of not conducting any espionage activity whatsoever in the United States or activities against the interests of the United States, given that the United States is a true friend of Israel," he said.

"The unit, which was involved in the gathering of material relating to the enemies of Israel and their terrorist activities has been disbanded and the head of the unit has been relieved of his duties."

It was unclear Saturday why Mr. Gal had issued the statement. On Friday, Mr. Gal had said it was inappropriate to comment because a Justice Department investigation was under way.

But Israeli Government sources said later that the statement was approved word by word by Prime Minister Shimon Peres, Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir.

Israeli Government sources have said that two diplomats, one in Wash-

ington and the other in the Israeli Consulate General in New York, were Mr. Pollard's contacts in the United States. The diplomats returned home quietly after Mr. Pollard's arrest.

Official Tells of Plea Bargain

Mr. Pollard, who was a counterterrorism analyst at a Navy facility in Maryland, was arrested last November after he and his wife drove to the Israeli Embassy, apparently seeking asylum. Mr. Pollard was arrested after leaving the embassy compound and Mrs. Pollard was arrested later. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Mr. Pollard has acknowledged that he provided Israeli officials with stacks of classified documents

gathered from the Navy.

The Administration official, who asked not to be named, said he did not know the military rank or whereabouts of the Israeli who is facing charges. The charges, the American said, could be filed as early as next week.

According to the Administration official, Mr. Pollard is nearing agreement on a plea bargain that would require him to cooperate fully with an investigation that, at times, has strained relations between the United States and Israel.

"The Government of Israel reiterates that in accordance with the agreement reached in December 1985 between Israel and the United States, full cooperation has been and is continuing," the Israeli statement said. "The Government of Israel restates its commitment in this matter."